United Nations S/2015/843

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 November 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 9 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces dated 9 November 2015 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Raimonda **Murmokaitė**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

15-19570 (E) 101115

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Annex to the letter dated 9 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces has consistently supported efforts to achieve a political transition in Syria, and we continue to work to achieve a resolution to the crisis in Syria through the path set out in the Geneva communiqué. Ongoing discussions in Vienna to bring about an end to the violence in Syria may yet help to provide a pathway to peace and democracy. But for the talks in Vienna to have any hope of success, the protection of Syrian civilians must be guaranteed.

Approximately 1,000 civilians die every month in Syria. Five Syrian children are killed every day, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. As the Secretary-General stated to the Security Council on 30 September 2015, "We need to take urgent measures to protect civilians from widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. We have an obligation to the Syrian people." This is an obligation that is as incumbent upon the participants of talks in Vienna as it is upon the United Nations and the rest of the international community. The notable absence of any Syrians in Vienna risks taking talks in an unhelpful direction, where the essential wants and needs of Syrians themselves are ignored.

A political process in Syria begins and ends with Syrians. This was confirmed in the Vienna communiqué of 30 October, Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and the Geneva communiqué of June 2012. As these documents clearly stipulate, only when there is Syrian support and trust will a peaceful settlement be reached.

The key to winning Syrians' confidence lies in civilian protection. Over the past several months, the Syrian people have been perfectly clear: civilian protection must be at the core of any political process aimed at resolving the crisis. Failure to take measures to protect civilians will make efforts to achieve a political solution impossible and will lack the buy-in of Syrians themselves. As we saw in Geneva, peace talks that take place while Syrian civilians are being slaughtered will fail to earn the legitimacy required to forge a political deal capable of resolving the crisis.

For the Vienna process to stand a chance of winning the support of Syrians, the allies of the Syrian people must provide clear guarantees that Syrian civilians will be protected, in particular from indiscriminate aerial bombardment, which remains the foremost killer of Syrian civilians, responsible for 62 per cent of all civilian deaths in October 2015. The implementation of a no-bombing zone would stem the killing in Syria, slow the exodus that prompts the refugee crisis and lay the foundation towards a political solution to the crisis.

Syrians insist on and deserve protection. If Member States are serious about ending the crisis in Syria, Syrian voices must be heard in Vienna and their perspective prioritized above all others.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative
of the Syrian National Coalition
to the United Nations